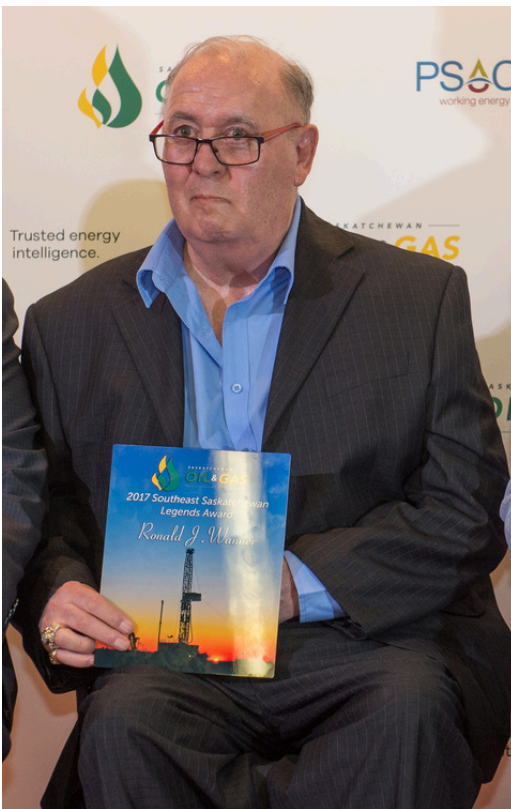




SASKATCHEWAN
OIL & GAS
SHOW

2017 Southeast Saskatchewan Legends Award Recipients



Ronald J. Wanner



Ken Spearing



Mel Grimes



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2019 Southeast Saskatchewan Legend

Ronald J. Wanner

Ronald J Wanner is the founder of Viking Oilfield Equipment, Venture Well Service, T.Bird Oil, Firesky Energy, and several other service and holding companies. Over the past 45 years, the Wanner group of companies grew to be a complete vertically integrated oilfield operation. Its customer base included 600 companies spanning almost 5 decades, 3 Canadian provinces, 10 oil producing States south of the border.

Ron Wanner grew up on a farm near Macoun Sk. and started working at the OK Economy grocery store in Estevan in the summer of 1961.

The following spring he attended college in Regina, and graduated with a bookkeeping diploma. He married Dorothy Barnstable from Outram SK and had 3 children - Debbie, Kelly, and Cory.

He took a job in fall of 1962 at Auto Electric as labourer and waited for an accounting job to come calling. British American Oil was looking for an accountant in Estevan, and Ron was chosen. Over the next ten years, he worked his way up to yard manager and inventory control. He learned many skills such as oil accounting, accounts payable, logistics, and purchasing. This would lend itself invaluable when he started his own business full time.

In 1966, a close friend and himself bought a new backhoe together. His partner would run the backhoe Monday to Friday and Ron would run it on weekends and holidays after working the week for British American Oil. After 3 years, it was time to branch out on his own and expand. With two backhoes, a gravel truck, and a little loader, Ron's Trenching & Hauling was formed.

In 1972 he quit BA Oil and that same year started Viking Surplus Oilfield Equipment. Along the way, Viking Surplus grew into a multi faceted mfg and service provider of new and reconditioned oilfield equipment that still goes on today.

After participating in a few oil wells oil production grew into a business of its own. T. Bird Oil was formed in 1982. In the mid 1990's TBird Oil hired a management team to grow its production company. The Wanner family and its management team split the assets of TBird Oil and formed a second entity called Firesky Energy. Both companies grew to over a 1000 bbls day. TBird was sold to Crescent Point in 2014, and today Firesky Energy is still very active in the community and continues to grow production.

Ron always said his personal ability was very limited, so he made up for it with determination and hard work. His attitude that every customer, deserves the same price made it his mission to help serve every small or large company who called upon his service.

Ron worked tirelessly serving his friends, family and the oil industry until his near fatal stroke in 2014. Today, at the age of 75 he advises his family business and works hard to please his 12 grandchildren.



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Ken Spearing

Ken started his career working seismograph out of Carlyle in 1953. In 1954 he went to work for Frye Construction building leases for the newly found oil in SE Sask. On his days-off he worked as a roughneck on the Drilling rigs. In 1956 Ken purchased a tank truck from Ernie Bowman and in 1957 he and Ernie formed Bowman & Spearing trucking, this partner-ship lasted until 1978 at which Ken Bought out Bowman and the Company became Spearing Services Ltd.

In the coming years, Ken along with his sons built this company into on a of the largest tank trucking company in S.E. Saskatchewan. The Spearing Family sold out in 2006 and Ken retired. The company still operates as Spearing Services. The blue and white trucks can be seen on almost every road and highway in SE Saskatchewan.

Ken went through many hardships along the way but survived and was able to make a good living for him and his family as well as his employees.



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2019 Southeast Saskatchewan Legend

Mel Grimes

Melvyn Duane Grimes, who everyone called “Mel,” played a large part in literally transforming the Saskatchewan oilpatch landscape. He passed away Nov. 15, 2016 at the age of 69.

Born Feb. 2, 1947, Mel Grimes grew up the third of five children; Gary, Judy, Melvyn, Barbara and Karen. Since the 1940s, their parents, Clayton and Kathleen Grimes, owned and operated Grimes Sales & Service Ltd., a Lampman-based farm implement dealership. The dealership included brands like Versatile, New Holland, Degelman and Morris Rod Weeder.

After high school Mel found work in the oilpatch, becoming Dome Petroleum’s youngest field operator, at 19. He would work both in the oilfield and with his father’s business.

In 1968, at age 21, he married Margaret Mayer of Frobisher. A daughter Stacey was born to Mel and Margaret in 1971, followed by a son Clinton in 1974.

In 1972, Mel’s father Clayton passed away, leaving the operation of the business to his family. Kathleen (Mel’s mother) did the books, and Mel took over running the business. Once established in the implement business, he left the oilfield and although he had offers to go overseas to work, being with his family was important. Mel got out of implement dealing in 1989, but he still kept his land with seeding and harvest being his favorite times.

In 1984 Mel went into partnership with Paul Grimes (a cousin) with Southern Resources, a junior oil company working in southeast Saskatchewan. Mel bought out Paul eventually, and was in turn bought out by Talisman Energy Inc. in 1995.

During this time he was also buying and selling used pumpjacks through Grimes Sales & Service. It was a small operation and very much a family affair, with Clinton as the picker operator, Kent Lees as the swamper, Gerald Garton as the shop foreman/mechanic, and Margaret doing the books. Stacey’s husband, Keith Wempe, was in dental school. He was put to work painting pumpjacks in the summer.

Grimes Sales & Service happened to supply pumpjacks for Paul Cheung’s company, Grand Bow, and in 1997 Paul while looking for a drilling rig in China, ended up partnering with the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC). CNPC showed Cheung the HG pumpjack, and he wanted to bring it to the Canadian market, using it first on his own wells.

Looking for someone local to work with, Merlin Skjonsby suggested to Cheung that he work with Mel Grimes. Grimes and Cheung became 50/50 partners in the venture to bring the pumpjack with the curved walking beam to Canada

In 2000 they brought in six pump jacks initially for testing. Two went directly to Cheung’s own wells near Carlyle. Several years were spent in refining the pumpjack with annual orders increasing from 20 in 2001 to 80, then 200, then 400. In total over 14,000 HG jacks have been sold.

Grimes and Cheung also bought into the factory, near Beijing, that was manufacturing the pumping units. In the spring of 2014, the business, including interest in the factory in China, was sold to Schlumberger, the largest oilfield services company in the world.

It’s important to note here that in the name “Grimes Sales & Service,” the “Service” part was not an afterthought. Service was absolutely key to Mel Grimes’ way of doing business. If there were any problems, he made sure they were fixed right away.

That approach was no more evident than in the sales of the HG jacks, in addition to these jacks being more energy efficient and less expensive, the service was unbeatable. When a customer got a new jack, they would call up Mel Grimes, give him the size of the well, the rods and weights expected, and he would tell them right away how to set it up. It would be working properly right away, without fuss.

Paul Cheung said “We had this belief that if anything was wrong with the product, we would replace it”. That would often go beyond a one-year guarantee. The product itself was good but the market dominance was due to Mel Grimes and his approach to service.

Mel Grimes was, in many ways, a private man who in later years would eschew publicity. He was a frequent and generous philanthropist who strongly preferred to give anonymously, often to hospital charities. Once, in support Estevan’s new skating arena, he donated a pumpjack for charity auction, but said he regretted the attention it brought. He preferred to be anonymous.

Mel is a very fitting inductee into our new Southeast Saskatchewan Legends category.